

APPROVAL REQUEST

1. Michigan Works! Agency Michigan Works! West Central	2. MWA No. 16
3. Plan Title(s) 21 st Century Strategic Planning (PI 06-07)	
1. Plan/Modification Number 06-01	2. Program Period 8/1/06 to 6/30/07

THE CHIEF ELECTED OFFICIAL(S) AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD HEREBY REQUEST APPROVAL OF THIS DOCUMENT

Authorized Chief Elected Official James L. Pinkerton, Chair	Date June 6, 2007
Authorized Chief Elected Official	Date
Authorized Chief Elected Official	Date
WDB Chairperson Sheri Thompson	Date June 6, 2007

OWD-166 (4/03)

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Michigan Works! West Central
21st Century Workforce
Coordinated Strategic Partnership
Plan Narrative

I. Introduction

The activities described in this narrative, envision a unified system that is employer driven to provide the types of resources and services that are the means of addressing the overall goals of this initiative. All of the activities are inter-related and part of a unified structure that is the means to bring appropriate services to a focal point as needed or desired by area companies and workers. Key partners in plan development include the four Economic Development professionals in the five county region, (Economic Development Organizations in Mason, Mecosta, Newaygo and Osceola Counties) and the two public post-secondary educational agencies, West Shore Community College and Ferris State University.

II. Unified Approach to Working with Employers

This is seen as the key area to the delivery system. The area coordinates well on Rapid Response and other areas, but the structure is not systemic. A model that promotes increased understanding and further integration and awareness is being developed around South Central Michigan Works! BEST program. South Central is providing training and technical assistance on this system, which identifies concerns early and is responsive to the needs of business. Increased early intervention, with resources for employee training and other areas will be the basis for the overall system. Two West Central Service Provider staff are being trained in the BEST program.

A focus will be on economic base industries, but will also include other industries and significant employment retention or expansion opportunities. Economic Base Industries are those that produce a product or service that is sold outside of the MWA, the production and sale brings revenue and wages into the MWA. Specific businesses may be selected by any of the partners bringing the situation to the attention of the other partners. Targeted services will be arranged by the partners based on the appropriateness of the activity and resources of the partner. Specific targeting isn't practical in a rural area where all employment opportunities are important to the local economy. A key for early intervention is job retention and the avoidance of layoffs. This unified approach will work heavily with Economic Development partners in Mason, Mecosta, Osceola and Newaygo Counties, and Educational Agencies including Ferris State University and West Shore Community College to bring awareness of employer needs and the identification and approach to companies that may be interested in the services available. Job expansion through existing employers will also be targeted. Layoff aversion and growth are the key targets and outcomes of this service.

Cross training and a unified team approach to potential growth and retention is a part of the overall delivery system. An overview of the BEST program has been presented to the WDB, LEO, Economic Development Agencies and West Central Service Providers at the October

WDB-LEO meeting. Training is being established with agency partners to learn the system and have significant input into the “local flavor” of this approach. Training and exchanges between partners will augment a further understanding of each others services, to the point where each partner can give an overview and basic information to a business customer, and make an informed referral for more specific information and specific services of interest. These training opportunities will be ongoing, in local areas, and will be scheduled soon after the BEST model is developed locally in the fall of 2007.

Specific Objectives

- Training in the BEST Program for the core group established
- Adaptations to a local model, including “practice” session
- Integration of service delivery from local sources
- Integrate presentation of Incumbent Workers, Workforce Programs, Training initiatives such as No Worker Left Behind for hiring new workers, along with the Talent Bank, and Training activities by area colleges.

The timeframe is ongoing, beginning with the staff trained in the BEST program to be completed by June of 2007.

Increased integration with local programs is ongoing. It has started with Incumbent Workers, Economic Development Activities, and the Talent Bank. Other integration with Basic Skills training will be in place in the fall of 2007 with further exchanges and meetings on a scheduled basis thereafter.

The timeframe builds on items that are already integrated in delivery, such as Rapid Response and the link with Incumbent Workers, training and the Talent Bank.

Integration is envisioned to be in county or multi county groupings, rather than one unified whole. This will recognize the interest and areas of responsibility of the organizations involved. In Mecosta County, for example, the Mecosta County Economic Development Corporation will work with the West Central Service Provider staff who has been trained in BEST and the West Central Incumbent Worker program to integrate the approach to employers in this community. Ferris State University will also be a partner and resource in the area of employee training, and other Service Providers will be brought into the mix when their resources are appropriate to the identified need. In Osceola County it will be the County Economic Alliance, in Newaygo County, Newaygo County Economic Development Office, and in Mason County the EDC.

Integration will include coordinated employer contact, beginning with Economic Development. Given the working relationship among the partners, an informal process will be used to make referrals, with initial discussion in phone conversations and documentation using e-mails. The partners for a specific area or project will get together as needed as the process continues.

III. Assess the regional Workforce and Economy

Current data shows the area population is increasing at a faster rate than the state and the labor force is declining at a slower rate than the state. Current information (2002-2005) shows employment in manufacturing and retail trade declining, while other areas are growing.

Further mapping of the trends will be done, and will heavily use information from the DLEG LMI Bureau, along with other information from Economic Development, Ferris State University and West Shore in terms of area training needs, with anecdotal information from employers to round out the picture. Resource mapping and coordination will be conducted as a part of the BEST program as the integration-leveraged resources model. Staff from MWA Service Providers who are trained in this program will assist in the use of this service model.

A priority is expected to develop on economic base industries, and a diversification of the area economy, but in a rural labor surplus area, all jobs are important. The resource mapping will include a focus or potential targeting of resources to address the local workforce in areas such as skill attainment and meeting the needs of available and projected opportunities.

Specific Objectives

- Review available information
- Determine additional informational needs and request data
- Determine focus for initiative - is economic base and health care type industries the continued focus or will there be a changes or additions.

From experience with training and information from employers, we know that specific areas such as meeting quality standards, industrial maintenance, adapting to new processes or equipment, use of software to increase productivity, and quick changeover are in high demand by area industry.

Each partner will provide appropriate data that will identify particular types of training shortages. Information from DLEG Labor Market Information and other sources will be a part of the overall process.

One of the key things employers will share, but its anecdotal, is the need for workers with basic skills. A major emphasis of the overall 21st Century planning for this area is to assist in increasing the basic skill level of workers. The use of WorkKeys assessments and connected software for basic skills training, (KeyTrain) has been selected for use in our region's five Workforce Service Centers. This plays into the request for assistance in acquiring the software that makes this type of training possible and could allow other customers to have access to these tools. While current program funding and the WIRED grant can and will be used for the acquisition, the use of these training and assessment tools is restricted to those workers eligible and enrolled in one of the programs, such as Work First/JET for required skills enhancement and WIA for basic skills training, an Intensive Service requiring enrollment. The possibility of a Waiver to allow Basic Skills enhancement using WIA funding to be considered a Core rather than an Intensive service to allow all interested persons to benefit from this training was explored. The area was informed USDOL would

deny such a waiver request. The use of 21st Century planning funding requested for part of the acquisition, one time start up and initial operating costs is intended to make these services available to all workers and employers as part of the overall plan to increase the skills of the workforce in this basic area, and to build a “skills pool” of talent that can be used to meet the current and ongoing needs of employers and workers as well as contribute to job retention and economic development activities. Similar start up costs associated with the state Interview USA initiative could use 21st Century Jobs funding so that all customers could benefit from this service, and a wider selection of workers have the potential to be available to area employers.

Our vision is to have assessment and skills enhancement available to all customers, including those not in a program or those currently employed workers seeking to improve their skills for advanced training, or different or higher skilled positions. Current program rules do not allow for this to occur, and restrict access to only some enrolled customers. The actual provision of services is basically self service for skills enhancement, with minimal staff assistance to get started. The skills enhancement is necessary to promote skill improvement if the Work Keys certificate system is to be available universally.

IV. Develop Regional Lay-off Response Services

The Rapid Response process will continue to be integrated to include appropriate agency partners. There are two meetings in an average Rapid Response. An initial Rapid Response is often held with the company, state Coordinator and MWA. This **may be** followed by a larger meeting involving agency partners and a wider audience of management and worker representatives to review options and the best methods of presentation.

The next step, which may be second or third, depending upon the situation, is to hold one or more larger meetings with the workers affected to provide information on services available.

Resources including WIA, Trade Adjustment Assistance as appropriate, Employment Services and other activities are included along with making agency resources, in terms of education and other services available. **The entities available to the workers include those of Service Providers and Agency Partners. Adult Service Providers would explain WIA, the youth provider would explain the youth program as applicable, the ES provider would explain the ES along with Trade Act services if appropriate, and educational agencies would have an opportunity to be available to workers either at these sessions or in later ones on an individual or small group basis. Each Service Provider would present and provide information on the programs they operate, in an integrated fashion, which includes how the programs are coordinated and how workers can participate in several programs and information that permits them to make informed decisions about their options.**

There may be a Joint Adjustment Committee formed if this is appropriate.

Coordination of the presentation and resources by agency partners is discussed with the workers at the earlier meetings **of a JAC**, so the most appropriate and effective methods are used.

Other items that may be provided include a resource table, an opportunity for individual appointments, arranging workshops, and information in areas employees or the employer request. The Rapid Response process will be enhanced, by a pre-planned flexible response with agency partners that leaves options on specifics for discussion with the employer and worker representatives.

The area is involved with the state in their development of a revised Rapid Response Data Base that will meet state and local reporting requirements. The area envisions using the state data base, with local data runs by county, with a requirement of entering data one time for both state and local needs. There may be local reports or segregation of data to meet local needs as a part of this system. Working with the state data base is thought to be more efficient and less duplicative, and therefore much less costly than having a separate stand alone data base for the area. The volume of data does not justify the creation of a separate data base at this time.

Specific Objectives

- Review the current Rapid Response System
- Suggest changes or refinements
- Revise Rapid Response procedures
- Implement State data base locally

Timeframes

- Presently occurring and ongoing
- By the end of October, 2007
- By the end of November 2007
- Will use state schedule with local implementation to follow.

Information on layoffs or closings is already readily shared among the programs, economic development partners and educational agencies. A more formal e-mail based notification and update system will be developed.

Services for specific employers in a lay off or closing situation will continue to be coordinated as part of the Rapid Response process. With the implementation of the BEST system, this may be another avenue of early warning that allows for an earlier intervention before the decision to close is made. This is in addition to the information shared by local Economic Development partners who are often the first to be aware of pending situations and share the information with Michigan Works!

V. Develop Regional Lay-off Prevention Services

Early intervention, training of Incumbent Workers, and the BEST program are the major activities under development for the overall delivery system. While encouraging new jobs and business is so important, retaining and expanding the industries and job opportunities in the area is a clear priority. The BEST model begins with a fact-finding interview with the key stake-holders to determine if an atmosphere exists which will allow the program to proceed. A key feature is early intervention that can focus shared programs and services as part of a “layoff aversion” process designed to prevent downsizing or closure due to the employer’s inability to compete in the larger global economy. By using the BEST process, workforce and economic development partners can offer resources and training that are much more effective than the traditional approach that may not address core problems. Staff and

partner training to expand and improve the unified approach to employer services using the BEST model will be done with technical assistance from South Central Michigan Works!

BEST is a program that uses a business solution approach to a demand driven system that has been developed in the South Central Michigan Works! Area and is recommended by the Department of Labor and Economic Growth. It focuses on business as the primary customer and helps determine via an interview and matching process, employer services and business solutions that match program services to the needs of business customers on an individual basis.

Specific Objectives

- Training in the BEST model
- Additional promotion of Incumbent Worker and other training
- Examine alternative delivery methods
- Streamline communications among partners

Designated Michigan Works! Service Provider staff, are being trained in the BEST model this year and will build on existing linkages with Economic Development. While joint visits to employers have occurred previously, the new method of assessing business needs is anticipated to result in increased coordination and information sharing. Institutions that train workers are also among those who may be aware of opportunities for intervention. Communications between these agencies is excellent, but can be improved by increasing the direct contact between appropriate staff, with appropriate training.

Lay-off prevention is the most difficult activity, it involves the identification of companies based on information the company may consider proprietary or the release of which may cause a competitive disadvantage. For example a desire to target Incumbent Worker funding for training to enhance competitiveness to a company as part of layoff aversion, would require the identification of the company as being at risk. Companies are often reluctant to make this type of disclosure. Working with the area Economic Development Professionals and Educational Agencies that provide this type of training, the addition of staff trained in the BEST program is seen as a major step in helping to identify these companies.

State MEDC staff will also be a part of this linkage to the extent allowed with respect to confidentiality, to identify and share information that may benefit area companies.

Further integration is anticipated under the No Worker Left Behind initiative later this year. This developing initiative will further integrate some re-employment training services for dislocated workers. The focus of this initiative builds right into the integrated approach to customer service for employer and worker customers and may become an “umbrella” under which major portions of the worker re-training efforts are identified and services explained to potential customers.

Major portions of these collaborative efforts are ongoing, without specific timelines, as it builds on current coordinative relationships. We do expect an increase in obtaining and sharing information as the BEST program is implemented and more of the partners involved

become familiar with and benefit from this model. The training, promotion and alternative delivery methods objectives are expected to begin to show progress beginning as soon as the fall of 2007 and continue in 2008.

Looking at alternative delivery methods, includes the methods being implemented and we expect further progress will be made through 2007 as well and as the No Worker Left Behind initiative is integrated into the delivery system.

VI. Develop, Attract, Retain Talent & Implement 21st Century Scholarship Program

The key in these areas begins with the current labor force and assisting companies to remain and increase their competitive abilities. Workers will continue to have training available, through area educational institutions and the expanded Incumbent Worker and state funding.

In addition, Newaygo County's inclusion in a WIRED Grant will expand the opportunities for assessing the skill level of workers, using WorkKeys. In addition the MWA is working with West Shore Community College and a USDOL grant for unemployed and incumbent workers in Mason County. Again, WorkKeys is used to assess the skill level of workers and those seeking lower cost training. The Key Partners continue to be the Economic Development Agencies whose links with employers and potential growth, and local units of government that are involved in potential job growth. Michigan Works! programs are involved in the Scholarship and Incumbent Worker, as well as other employment and training programs and training institutions are also partners. The No Worker Left Behind initiative is also an integrated factor in the retention of talent that will help retain and attract new business and expansions of existing business and employment opportunities. Studies, such as **A New Agenda for a New Michigan** by Michigan Future Inc. by Lou Glazer a former Director of the Michigan Department of Commerce, show the availability of talent is the key indicator for job growth. That same study shows Western Michigan lagging in the talent as measured by education of the workforce.

A key tool in attracting employment opportunity in the higher skills areas, is having a pool of talented workers and being able to document and use the information for Economic Development. For example, the ability to have information on the skill level of the workforce, in WorkKey scores by City or Zip Code has been demonstrated to be an important part of an area effectively competing for a new company location or expansion.

An increase in this number of skilled workers can be acquired by an in-migration of skilled workers or an increase in the skill level of those already in the workforce or both. To increase the skill level of the existing workforce for the entire spectrum of workers, from basic skills to the higher skills required for the 21st Century jobs, and having evidence to show potential employers is key to the practical attainment of this objective. The request to obtain software, WorkKeys as an assessment tool that will measure and document the skill level of the workforce and KeyTrain basic skills software is an important part of improving and documenting the talent of the area workforce. This applies to customers attached to an existing program that can pay for their participation, and those customers who the request for assistance who are not attached to a program as well. The universal application of these

services to the entire workforce is seen as vital to the attainment of this objective. This is the integrated use of funding from programs, WIRED and 21st Century Jobs funding to provide integrated skills assessment, documentation, and basic skills improvement that will assist the overall area economy. In part, one time start up and operating costs may be shared among programs, including the 21st Century jobs, so that all interested workers may have access and participate in these assessment and enhancement activities. This will increase the number of persons whose skill level information can become part of the more comprehensive data needed for Economic Development. The numbers of other individuals (non-participants) participating in the assessment and skill enhancement is expected to be small, but should grow as the WorkKeys certification become requested by more employers.

We anticipate the further integration with the No Worker Left Behind initiative will also contribute to progress in increasing the skills of the area workforce. This initiative is being planned to become a part of the overall delivery system.

Quality assessments assist in matching workers to appropriate jobs and training, but training to increase skills is vital. On a basic level, software based training to increase skills is being acquired for each Workforce Service Center that will go along with the WorkKeys assessment. This means of enhancing basic skills is often a precursor of more specific skill training.

Additional assessment and more effective job/skills matching of workers and employers will be done using the “Interview USA” software system. This also helps workers to hone their interview skills and effectively communicate their abilities to potential employers. Job attraction and retention are thought to be the best ways to attract and retain talent. The assessment and enhancement of worker skills is crucial to this task.

Authorization to use funding from this plan to assist in the acquisition and use of the assessment and skill enhancement and interview software is requested. This is of particular importance for participants who may not register with a specific program.

Specific skill training will be provided using Incumbent Worker and state funding such as EDJT, along with company match. Eligible workers will have access to training for demand occupations via the WIA and other training programs. The skill enhancement to be qualified for training is a key addition to the system, and works with the enhanced assessments via WorkKeys.

The 21st Century Scholarship program is operational and all funds have been obligated. Dislocated Worker funding is also being used and funding from this plan may be used if permission is obtained. The Scholarship could be broadened to the last year or two of a certificate or 4 year program with this funding.

Specific Objectives

- Continue implementation of Scholarship program
- Obtain Assessment Software (WorkKeys)
- Obtain Skills Enhancement Software (KeyTrain)

- Train Staff in new resources
- Implement “Interview USA” and other Tools

K-12 integration into talent development programs is being explored. The implementation of state graduation requirements and objectives will in part serve to homogenize the academic training for K-12 students, and the use of portions of the WorkKeys assessments will standardize how these items can be reported. The expansion of WorkKeys into the general workforce as envisioned in this plan in cooperation with the WIRED initiative, are seen as key to having the ability to measure the skills of the area workforce in a standardized manner.

VII. Develop and Implement a Communications Strategy

Communications with partners will be expanded, and a broader outreach of partners and an integrated approach is envisioned. Much of the initial outreach to companies will be through economic development professionals, including MEDC. (A former local economic development director recently became the new MEDC Account Manager for all of West Central’s five counties.) Educational Institutions and Michigan Works! also have significant contacts and relationships that will be included in an awareness and individual contacts at appropriate points.

The key partners for the overall project continue to be the Economic Development Agencies, the Educational Training Providers (West Shore Community College, Ferris State University, and NCRESA), Michigan Works! including Service Providers, MEDC, and other entities as needed.

Specific Objectives

- Develop regular communications with partners
- Share information as appropriate on area business
- Develop an electronic outreach to area companies
- Assess and revisit these efforts

Michigan Works West Central 06-01

CREATING THE 21st CENTURY WORKFORCE

BUDGET PLAN

Budget Summary							
Grant Program Function or Activity	New or Revised Budget						
	Federal - WIA		Federal - Other		Non-Federal		Total
DW, Rapid Response	50,000						50,000
Total	\$0 \$50,000		\$0		\$0		\$50,000

Personnel Budget

The personnel costs are calculated using the following hours and hourly rates for each staff member.

Task	Hours						
	Employee MI Wks	Employee Econ Dev	Employee Post Secondary	Employee Service Provider	Employee Service Provider	Employee	Total
Task 1 Identify Resources and Communications Template	15	5	2	2	2		
Task 2 Develop Strategy	40	6	2				
Task 3 Rapid Response Procedure	30	3	2				
Task 4 Data Base	20	3	0				
Task 5 Unified Approach to Employers	50	20	4	100	100		
Task 6 Draft Plan	50	3	2				
Task 7 Field Test System	40	40	8	50	50		
Task 8 Modify System	15	8	2	8	8		
Task 9 Full Implementation	5	8	4	10	10		
Task 10							

Total Hours	265	96	26	170	170	\$0	\$0
Rates	\$25	\$25	\$25	\$25	\$25		
Total Personnel Costs	\$6,625	\$2,400	\$650	\$4,250	\$4,250	\$0	\$0
Budget Categories							
Item	Amount						
a. Personnel (from table above)							\$18,175
b. Fringe Benefits	(25%)						\$4,544
c. Travel							\$500
d. Equipment *	& USA						\$5,000
	Start Up	costs for	Computer	/scanners	Interview		
e. Supplies & materials &	software	KeyTrain	*				\$2,000
f. Phone and fax							\$100
g. Postage, overnight mail, shipping							\$50
h. Contractual							
i. Other/ Scholarships							\$14,631
j. Total Direct Charges (sum a-i)	\$0						\$45,000
k. Indirect Charges							\$5,000
j. Totals (sum of j and k)	\$0						\$50,000
Forecasted Cash Needs							
			1 st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter	Total
Federal - WIA			\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$7,000	\$13,000
Federal - Other							
Non-Federal							
Total			\$2,000	\$4,000	\$6,000	\$13,000	\$13,000
A maximum of ten percent of Workforce Investment Act funding may be utilized for administration.							

* & Carry forward operating costs for those not enrolled in a program

Projected Carry in to continue the ongoing activities is \$37,000